(c) and (d) Joining UPOV would be in the interest of our farmers as this would, *inter-alia*, facilitate greater investment in research for the development of new plant varieties; in order to ensure the availability of quality seeds to farmers; obviate the need to enter into a large number of bilateral agreements with other countries for mutual recognition of plant breeders' rights; enable Indian plant breeders to secure protection in all Convention countries with minimal formalities and costs, etc.

Utilization certificates for agricultural schemes

314. SHRI C.P. THIRUNAVUKKARASU: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is compulsory for the State Governments to submit utilization certificates, proposals and project reports to take benefits of the Centrally sponsored schemes for agricultural development;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the State Governments which have not submitting reports regularly; and

(d) the steps taken by Government against such State Governments?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI HUKUMDEO NARAYAN YADAV): (a) to (d) The information is being obtained and will be laid on the Table of the House.

Export cost of agricultural products

315. DR. AKHILESH DAS:
SHRI AIMADUDDIN AHMED KHAN (DURRU):

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether any new strategy has been evolved to reduce export cost of agricultural products, to provide direct assistance to farmers and make their products more competitive;

(b) if so, the details of the new strategy and how it marks an improvement over the earlier agri-exports strategy; and

(c) the improvement in agri-exports registered during the last three months, as compared to corresponding period last year?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI HUKUMDEO NARAYAN YADAV): (a) to (c) The Government have initiated various measures to reduce export cost of agricultural products to make them more competitive in the international market. These, *inter alia*, include setting up of agri-export zones to provide enhanced international market access and improved infrastructural facilities, better flow of credit, assistance for reducing the marketing costs such as for transport, handling and processing on export of selected agricultural commodities as also removal of export restrictions like requirement for registration, packaging, etc. Besides various agriculture development schemes providing assistance to farmers on agricultural inputs such as seeds, fertilizers, irrigation, insecticides, pesticides as also for research and development and extension for reducing production costs and for improving efficiency of agricultural production are also being implemented.

The value of agricultural exports has increased from Rs. 25313.66 crores in the year 1999-2000 to Rs. 29485.85 crores during the year 2001-02. Similarly, the value of export of agricultural produce during the last quarter of the year 2001-2002 has also registered growth compared to the corresponding period of 2000-2001 as detailed below:—

Export of Agricultural Commodities

(Value: Rs. in crores)

	Year 2000-2001	Year 2001-2002
January	2399.61	2841.96
February	2616.62	3100.12
March	3234.25	2719.35
TOTAL:	8250.48	8661.43